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ABSTRACT

Prior to registration at the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP), most potential new students are given a battery of tests to place them into appropriate courses, specific areas of study, or special support programs. Most students are tested on one day and then asked to return on a subsequent day for counseling and registration. Between October 1984 and September 1985, 7,891 potential students were tested in math, writing, and reading. Of these, 1,090 (14%) had not registered for classes by the fall 1985 semester. A comparison of the test scores of the registrants and non-registrants who spoke English as a native language revealed the following: (1) 40.2% of the registrants and 39.9% of the non-registrants had scores placing them into college-level math courses; (2) 40.1% of the registrants and 27.1% of the non-registrants had scores placing them into college-level writing courses; and (3) 35.7% of the registrants and 24% of the non-registrants performed at college-level on the reading test. Among the potential students for whom English was a second language, there were no significant differences in the placement test scores of registrants and non-registrants. Though, in general, the students who registered had slightly higher scores than those who did not register, many of the students who did not register performed at college-level on the placement tests, suggesting that CCP might consider additional strategies to encourage enrollment when a potential student is tested. (UCM)

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AN ANALYSIS OF PLACEMENT TESTING AND REGISTRATION PATTERNS FOR NEW STUDENTS

Institutional Research
Report #35

November, 1986

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AN ANALYSIS OF PLACEMENT TESTING AND REGISTRATION PATTERNS FOR NEW STUDENTS

Prior to registration, most potential new students are given a battery of tests to assist in placing them into appropriate courses, specific areas of study, or special support programs. Under current institutional practice, most students are tested on one day and then asked to return on a subsequent day to meet with counselors/advisors and register.

For the purposes of this analysis, we looked at students who were tested in a year time period--from 10/1/84 through 9/10/85--and determined if they had or had not registered by the Fall 1985 semester. Of the 7891 total potential students tested, 1090 (14%) did not register. Separating these two groups further into English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students and non-ESL (termed here as "regular") students, we found that 109 (17%) of the ESL students tested did not subsequently register, and 981 (14%) of the regular students did not register. Potential ESL students were examined separately to see if this group responded differently to the placement testing program.

The following data describes the differences in specific test scores between the students who registered and those who did not register. Math One, Reading, and Writing test scores were considered. For purposes of this report, the scores have been grouped into ranges that most closely approximate a students' educational level at entrance.*

The Math test (Part One and Part Two) is administered to determine placement in Math courses. Students with Math One scores below 17 are placed in Math 116; those with scores above 17 are placed in Math 117 or a higher level course based upon Math Two test performance. The Reading and Writing test scores are not judged exclusively, but are compared together to determine individual placement. Placement by scores is as follows:

Writing Score/Placement		Reading Score/Placement	
3-5	(CAL)	1-8	(CAL)
6-8	(Remedial)	9-16	(Remedial)
9-11	(Remedial/CLP)	17-24	(Remedial)
12-14	(Regular)	25-32	(CLP)
15+	(Regular)	33-40	(Regular)
		Over 40	(Regular)

* Receiving a score in a particular range does not automatically classify a student into a specific program; individual test scores are analyzed in conjunction with background information on the students and performance on other tests.

The following table shows the frequencies, mean and median scores for the various subsets of students:

	#	%	Mean	Median
MATH ONE (score range 1-25)				
Regular - Registered			15.36	16.0
1-16	3727	59.8		
17+	2502	40.2		
	6229	100.0		
Regular - Not Registered			14.57	15.0
1-16	588	60.1		
17+	390	39.9		
	978	100.0		
ESL - Registered			15.19	15.5
1-16	279	56.0		
17+	219	44.0		
	498	100.0		
ESL - Not Registered			14.77	14.0
1-16	61	57.5		
17+	45	42.5		
	106	100.0		
WRITING (score range 3-18)				
Regular - Registered			10.19	10.0
3-5	22	0.4		
6-8	459	8.1		
9-11	2931	51.4		
12-14	2273	39.9		
15+	14	0.2		
	5699	100.0		
Regular - Not Registered			9.63	9.0
3-5	6	0.7		
6-8	133	15.2		
9-11	500	57.0		
12-14	236	26.9		
15+	2	0.2		
	877	100.0		

	#	%	Mean	Median
WRITING (continued)				
ESL - Registered			7.87	9.0
3-5	7	5.1		
6-8	48	35.3		
9-11	79	58.1		
12-14	2	1.5		
15+	0	0		
	136	100.0		
ESL - Not Registered			7.66	8.5
3-5	1	3.1		
6-8	15	46.9		
9-11	16	50.0		
12-14	0	0		
15+	0	0		
	32	100.0		
READING (score range 1-45)				
Regular - Registered			27.16	28.0
1-8	104	2.0		
9-16	697	13.4		
17-24	1245	23.9		
25-32	1399	26.9		
33-40	1370	26.3		
over 40	387	7.4		
	5202	100.0		
Regular - Not Registered			24.76	25.0
1-8	30	3.3		
9-16	174	19.3		
17-24	243	27.0		
25-32	238	26.4		
33-40	171	19.0		
over 40	45	5.0		
	901	100.0		
ESL - Registered			15.36	15.0
1-8	20	16.3		
9-16	54	43.9		
17-24	35	28.5		
25-32	12	9.8		
33-40	2	1.6		
over 40	0	0		
	123	100.0		

	#	%	Mean	Median
READING (continued)				
ESL - Not Registered			15.88	14.0
1-8	2	6.3		
9-16	16	50.0		
17-24	9	28.1		
25-32	4	12.5		
33-40	1	3.1		
over 40	--	-----		
	32	100.0		

Students who registered had slightly higher scores than those who did not register. The differences in the means of the two groups of regular students were greater than the differences for the two groups of ESL students. T-statistics were calculated to compare the difference in group means of the "registered" and "not registered" groups. The difference in the means for each test proved to be statistically significant ($p < .01$) for the regular students. The differences in means for registered and not registered ESL students were not found to be statistically significant.

Implications

1. A large number of students who indicate their intention to enroll at the College by completing the College's placement test battery do not, in fact, enroll. For the Fall, 1985 term there were 1090 (14%) students in this category.

2. For ESL students, performance on placement tests was not significantly different for registered and non-registered students. However, for non-ESL students, poor performance on the tests was associated with non-registration, suggesting students' self perceptions or anxiety about performance on the tests may have been associated with the decision not to register at the College.

3. Many of the students who did not register performed at the "regular course" level on the placement tests. The College may want to consider additional strategies to encourage enrollment at the time a potential student appears for testing.

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